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imagery analysis report

Soviet Special Combat Group in Afghanistan (S)

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SOVIET SPECIAL COMBAT GROUP IN AFGHANISTAN (S)

1. (S/D) The Soviets have demonstrated organizational flexibility in the tactical use of their ground units in Afghanistan. An example of this is the identification of a special combat group in Kabul in mid-June 1980. This combat group was composed of units from several divisional elements of the motorized rifle division stationed in the Kabul area. This combat group contained major elements of one motorized rifle regiment, one BM-21 battery from the divisional multiple rocket launcher (MRL) battalion, and one 152mm self-propelled (SP) howitzer battery from the divisional artillery regiment (Figure 1). This combat group was probably organized for a specific field operation, and variations of this type of combat group may be seen in the future in Afghanistan.

2. (S/D) Units and equipment forming the special combat group included the following: a 152mm SP howitzer battery (six 152mm SP howitzers and two ACRV M-1974 command vehicles) from the divisional artillery regiment stationed at Kabul Deployment Area Northwest [redacted] [redacted] a BM-21 MRL battery (six BM-21 and eight cargo trucks) from the divisional rocket launcher battalion, also stationed at Kabul Deployment Area Northwest (Figure 2); and major elements of the motorized rifle regiment stationed at Pol-E Charki Barracks Division Artillery Regiment Headquarters Artillery Depot [redacted]. Units and equipment from the motorized rifle regiment included the following: a tank company (six to eight tanks), two motorized rifle battalions (71 BTR-60PB armored personnel carrier—APC—and six probable GAZ mortars), an artillery battalion (eighteen 122mm D-30 howitzers and 18 cargo trucks), a reconnaissance company (11 BMP APCs and six BRDM-2 armored cars), an engineer detachment (one MTU 20 and one truck-mounted crane), and a motor transport company (60 cargo trucks and 13 POL trucks).

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3. (S/D) The elements from the motorized rifle regiment left Pol-E Charkhi [redacted] [redacted]. The tents in the unit bivouac areas of the departed units were not taken down, and the remainder of the regiment (including the antitank guided missile battery and the air defense battery) was still present.

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4. (S/D) The BM-21 battery and the 152-mm SP howitzer battery left Kabul deployment area [redacted]

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5. (S/D) The special combat group had returned to the Kabul area [redacted]. Two motorized rifle battalions, the BM-21 MRL battery (minus one BM-21), elements of the 152-mm SP howitzer battery (minus three SP howitzers), the 122mm D-30 howitzer battalion, elements of the reconnaissance company, the engineer detachment, and the motor transport company were observed in a large formation in the motorized rifle regiment bivouac area at Pol-E Charkhi (Figure 3). The tank company had returned to the tank battalion bivouac area. Three 152mm SP howitzers and one BM-21 MRL were unaccounted for.

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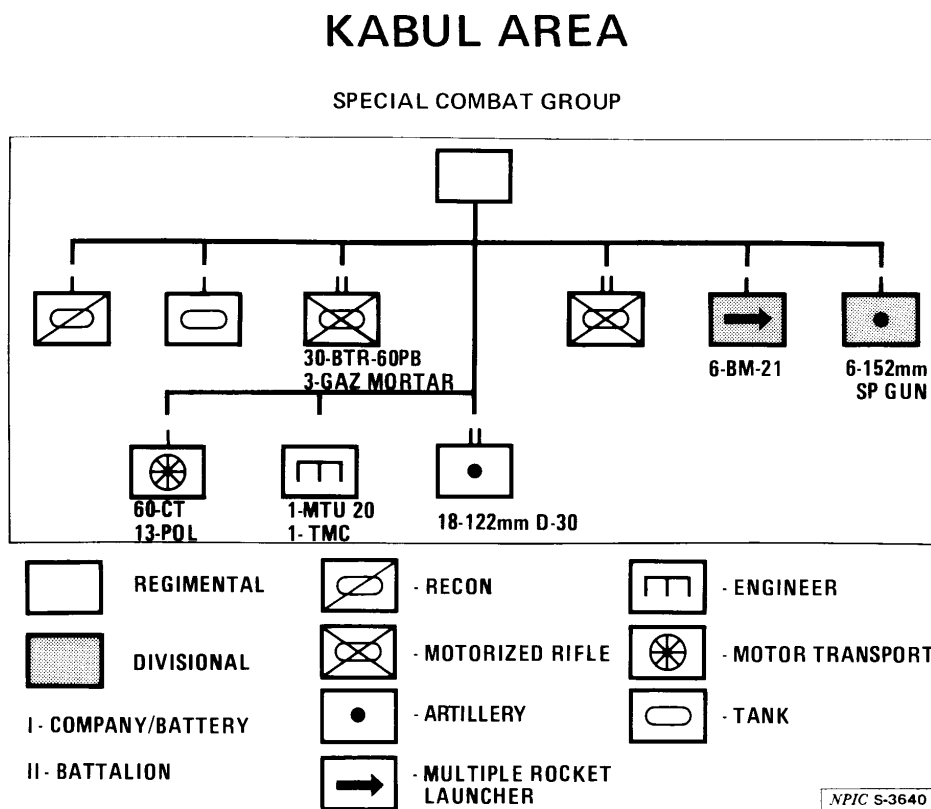


FIGURE 1. ORGANIZATION OF SPECIAL COMBAT GROUP

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